

Every Child Learning Every Day



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An early childhood newsletter from the State Department of Education

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READY TO LEARN

Stories for February focus on feelings

By Dr. Stan Steiner

This month has a built-in theme of relationships from loved ones to friendships. Sharing a book or two that expresses a feeling can open doors for additional communication.

"Kisses Kisses Kisses/Hugs Hugs Hugs," by Jenny Miglis, 2003, Price Stern Sloan. A

wonderful book expressing the many kinds of kisses and hugs. A good

book to share with family and friends.

"Mi Amor Por Ti/My Love for You," by Susan L. Roth, 1997/2003, Dial. This is a delightful counting book and clever means of expressing your love with your little ones.

"All Families are Special," by Norma Simon, 2003, Albert Whitman & Co. A great book for emphasizing the beauty of diversity. Books depicting children in a nontraditional family are difficult to find. This wonderful book reflects the many combinations of today's families.

"A Frog in the Bog," by Karma Wilson, 2003, McElderry Books. Deliciously captivating word play and rhyme for reading aloud and more. An overly greedy frog learns a lesson from an unsuspecting log in the bog.

Dr. Stan Steiner teaches Children's Literature at Boise State University. You may find more book reviews at <http://education.boisestate.edu/ssteine>.



Civic knowledge starts early

Dear Reader:

Each year February brings with it an attention to our nation's civic heritage with the focus on George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays and the President's Day holiday.

Although we often talk about building reading and math skills, parents and early childhood education also play an important role in building preschoolers' civic knowledge.

Here are some activities that you can do:

Point out and identify the symbols of our nation: flags, eagles, monuments in parks, red-white-and-blue items.

Teach children the "Pledge of Allegiance", "Yankee Doodle," or other patriotic songs or poems.

Visit a historical museum or stop at a historical marker during a road trip. Use this opportunity to spark



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children's imaginations by asking them what they think life must have been like during the times of pioneers.

Help create a sense of personal history by sharing

your family stories. Tell about the activities you did growing up or stories about the child. Don't forget to encourage grandparents to tell their stories also.

Take your child with you when you vote or to public rallies or civic events.

Talk about some of the "rules" we follow — crossing the street, stopping at stop signs, and showing respect for others.

You may also want to check out "Liberty's Kids," a cartoon on PBS and website that focuses on the American Revolution.

One of our goals for the young people who graduate from our schools is that they will be engaged in the civic life of our nation.

The activities they experience throughout their childhood at home and school will help them reach that goal.

READY TO LEARN

Writing activities help build literacy skills

These three simple activities for children at various developmental stages can help build the foundation for writing skills with preschools.

Draw Your Day (Beginners)

For this activity, a variety of drawing materials such as crayons, markers, pencils and paper are needed.

What to do: As the children watch you, write at the top of the paper "Today at preschool, I will..." or "Today at home, we will..."

Ask the children to finish the sentence with a drawing of something that will happen that day at each of those places.

This activity helps children learn that they can draw a picture to help tell a story or describe an event that can also be written.

Sequence a Story (Children Making Progress)

For this activity, crayons



or markers, a stapler, and three pieces of paper per child are needed.

What to do: Tell

the children about something you've done recently, like shopping or making dinner.

On large paper, draw three simple pictures showing the beginning, middle, and end of the experience. Use those pictures to tell the story again.

Help the children think of a recent experience. Talk to them about the beginning, middle and end of their experiences.

Have each child draw three pictures describing the beginning, middle and end of her experience. Write a description for each picture.

Help the children put their pictures in order and then staple

the pages together as a book that the children can use to retell their story.

This activity helps children learn to use words and pictures to communicate an experience. They also learn about the importance of the sequence in a story.

Send a Message (Advanced)

A box decorated as a mailbox with a slot, paper and pencils are needed.

What you do: Model writing a short message to one of the children in order to introduce the activity. The message can include both text and pictures that represent the text.

Tell the children that they can each write messages to you and put them in the mailbox. The children can use scribbles, letters, and pictures for their messages.



RESOURCES

Genetic services available in state

Although Idaho is a large rural state, its residents are beginning to have greater access to genetic services to help understand the role genetics play in birth defects and other conditions.

In January, the Early Childhood Information Clearinghouse featured "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions" on the Idaho State Genetic Service Program.

The full article is available at <http://www2.state.id.us/dhw/ecic/home.htm>.

For information about program contact 1 (208) 334-2235, ext. 261.

What are genetic services?

Genetic services, including genetic counseling, are offered to people with genetic or inherited diseases and their families and to individuals (often children with birth defects or developmental delays) who are suspected of having a genetic condition.

Who can benefit from genetic services?

People, including parent of children, who have a birth defect or genetic condition;

Parents who have a child with developmental delay, mental retardation or other problems with growth and development;

Women who have had three or more miscarriages or infertility from an unknown cause;

Women considering having children in which:

The mother will be 35 years or older at the time of delivery

The members of the couple are blood relatives (second cousins or closer)

Testing during the pregnancy has indicated that the baby may have a birth defect or genetic condition

There is a family history of birth defects, mental retardation, or genetic disease;

People who are concerned that they may have inherited a tendency to develop cancer;

People who are concerned that may have inherited a tendency to develop a neurologic condition such as Huntington Disease;

A person whose doctor or health care provider has recommended a genetic evaluation or genetic testing.

NUTRITION

Tips for making meals family matters

Family meals create close bonds and lifelong memories around the family table. Family meals and

meals in the group childcare setting can teach children about healthful eating. Adults, whether they are parents or the childcare provider) serve as great role models. This family meal can be a time to try new foods and be adventurous.

Try these easy ways to make family meals a pleasant part of



your family routine:

- Set a regular mealtime.

Regular mealtimes give children a chance to eat a variety of foods to get the right amount to grow, stay healthy, and maintain a healthy weight.

- Make it simple, make it quick! Spend less time in the kitchen and more time at the family table. Simple meals, hearty sandwiches taste great to children.

- Show that family or group meals are important. During mealtime, turn off the TV. Turn off the telephone.

- Eat around a table. It is

easy to talk and listen when your family or group of children face each other.

- Enjoy meal talk. Make easy conversations. Talk so everyone can be a "star" at mealtime. Each child will listen and learn to feel included.

- Be realistic about mealtime. Try to sit down together. Keep meals from lasting too long.

- Try these new foods during mealtime—kiwi fruit cut into small pieces, different flavors of cheese cut in squares, rectangles, circles and triangles, star fruit sliced thinly, jicama slices with ranch dip.

READY TO LEARN

Blocks are toys that grow with your child

Blocks are simple toys that provide loads of learning opportunities. The next few issues of "Every Child Learning Every Day" will detail the value of block play with excerpts from a National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) article.

Part 2

Unit blocks are a good investment because children may continue to use them as they grow.

Infants and toddlers enjoy simply touching and gripping larger, textured blocks.

As toddlers, they develop more muscle control and are able to combine blocks, stack them, or line them up. Two year olds may demonstrate their first

attempts at building structures, and show the beginnings of fantasy play.

Around the age of three, children learn how to balance and fit pieces together to build sturdier towers, then bridges and enclosures.

Three and four year olds begin to recognize designs and patterns, their towers and buildings becoming works of art.

In kindergarten and early primary grades, blocks allow children to recreate structures, cities and landscapes from every day life.

Next month: Part 3— How blocks encourage learning. *More information about the NAEYC is available at www.naeyc.org.*

INFORMATION

Book reveals somber realities

Though there is increasing awareness of the early years of life as an important period in human development, much is not known about the lives of young children — especially their physical and emotional well being, where they live and with whom, who cares for them, and obstacles for achieving healthy development.

A new data book — *America's Babies* — for the first time compiles statistics to help understand these factors and more about the more than 12 million babies and toddlers living in the United States.

For more information about the book or for copies visit www.zerotothree.org:

Some facts about babies, toddlers and their families found in the book include:

The risk of homicide for babies is the same as for teenagers. Infants face the greatest risk of homicide on the day they are born. The second-highest period for homicide risk is the eighth week of life, the period when babies cry the most. Support, resources and education are essential for parents of newborns.

Far too many infants and toddlers live in pov-

erty. The United States has the world's second highest rate of children living in poverty - 22.4 percent.

Only Mexico has more children living in households with incomes below 50 percent of the national median.

Infants are the fastest growing and largest cohort of children in foster care. 39,000 babies enter foster care each year, nearly a third of them directly from the hospital after birth. Less than 2 percent of children adopted through the U.S. foster care system in 1998 were infants, while 46 percent of infants adopted into American families were from foreign countries.

Many babies have parents in the military. In 2001, 401,532 infants and toddlers lived in families with parents (either mom or dad) in active duty military service or in the select reserve.

The Department of Defense military child development system provides care for the largest number of children on a daily basis of any employer in the United States; the system is considered a high-quality model for the nation.